KEEPING ON: MAINTAINING CLEAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF DURING A COVID-19 WORK FROM HOME SITUATION

Question: How does a circulation operation communicate effectively during a 4.5 month shutdown? Here is one story from Miami University.

Anatomy of a Rapid Shutdown
- March 9 – University Senate authorizes transition to virtual classes at month’s end.
- March 13 – Face-to-face classes end
- March 15 – University closes until August – Staff on Work-from-Home (WFH) status

Challenges
- Shutdown earlier than planned
- Extra time needed to format & deliver staff laptops
- Staff dispersed across 7 counties in Ohio and Indiana
- One staff without internet or smartphone.

Circulation Staff Projects During WfH
• Creating / Reviewing documentation.
• Online training + workshops
• Generating metadata for digitized items from Special Collections
• Transcribing digitized items from Special Collections

Keeping On, Keeping in Touch during Work-from-Home

Project Supervision
• Training before shutdown
• Troubleshooting by phone, email

Documenting Work Completed
• Staff compile on GoogleDocs
• Supervisors review for consistency

Individual meetings with supervisors
Unit meetings
• Phone, Zoom
• Opportunity for social contact, connection with co-workers, questions + updates

Social Contact
TLC (Tips, Laughs, Connected Community) Email Messages
• Photos of home workspace
• Furry at-home colleagues
• Tips on what has helped to adjust remotely
• Quotes, pictures, or anything that has made you laugh
• Anything that brightens your day

Slack Channels
• Proprietary app supporting chat, private groups + direct messaging

Learnings
• Thank heavens for pre-established phone lists
• Multiple, overlapping forms of communication are a plus
• Employees value social contact
• Work-from-Home can be a dynamic period in which library staff are able to carry on with regular and specially-assigned projects.

Contact Information
• Rob O’Brien Withers
  • Access Services Coordinator
  • witherre@miamioh.edu

Slack Channels